

Borough of Okehampton



The Annual Report

of the

Medical Officer of Health

and

Sanitary Officer



1945



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Public Health Staff

MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH :

DR. E. D. ALLEN-PRICE, M.D. (State Medicine), CH.B.,
D.P.H. (BIRM.)

SURVEYOR AND SANITARY INSPECTOR :

MR. R. ALAN BRUNSKILL, D.P., R.S.I.

ASSISTANT SANITARY INSPECTOR :

MR. E. FURSE

To the Okehampton Borough Council

MR. MAYOR, ALDERMEN AND GENTLEMEN,

I beg to submit my Annual Report for the year 1945. It is once again of necessity an abridged war-time edition.

The general health of the Borough remained good throughout the year, notifiable diseases were minimal, and the exanthemata gave no cause for concern.

The births were considerably below those for the previous year, and were exceeded slightly by deaths. This was to be expected as many of the younger people were away in the services during the period covered by this report.

Deaths from cancer were considerably below the average, but heart disease continues to hold its own as the major cause of mortality.

Section A.

General Statistics

Area (statute acres)	....	....	....	806
Population, 1931 census	....	....	....	3,307
Population, estimated, 1945	....	....	....	3,816
Number of inhabited houses	....	....	....	1,040
Rateable value	....	....	....	£23,709
Product of Penny Rate	....	....	....	£96

Vital Statistics

Live Births		Male	Female	
Legitimate	....	23	33	
Illegitimate	....	5	2	Total 63
				England and Wales
Birth rate per 1,000 resident population			16.5	16.1
Still Births	....	....	3	—
Still Birth rate	....	....	47.0	0.46
Deaths	....	Male 29	Female 37	Total 66
Death rate per 1,000 population	....		17.4	11.4
Deaths from puerperal causes	....		0.0	2.79
Deaths of infants under 1 year	....		6	—
Infantile Mortality	....		91.0	54.0

The 66 deaths of towns-folk during the year was made up as follows :—

INFECTIOUS CAUSES

Tuberculosis	....	....	2
Syphilis	....	....	1
Influenza	....	....	3
Infantile Diarrhoea	....	....	2

GENERAL CAUSES

Cancer	....	....	6
Diabetes	....	....	2
Cerebral Haemorrhage	....	....	4
Heart Disease	....	....	22
Bronchitis	....	....	3
Gastric Ulcer	....	....	1
Nephritis	....	....	7
Congenital Defects	....	....	2
All other causes	....	....	11

Total 66

AGE OF DEATH TABLE

Age	Under 1 yr.	1-4	5-14	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	65-74	Over 75	
Males	2	2	1	0	0	2	1	3	10	8	29
Females	4	1	1	0	1	0	2	3	11	14	37
Total	6	3	2	0	1	2	3	6	21	22	66

*Section B.***General Provision of the Health Services**

The general provision of the health services remain much the same as in previous years. As this report is only intended to be in skeleton form, your Medical Officer can only report in general terms. In his opinion none of the essential health services are more than rudimentary or non-existent. We have no laboratory service nearer than Exeter, and it is not possible to practice modern medicine without constant recourse to laboratory aid. The treatment centre and clinic facilities for school children are rudimentary. The hospital accommodation is inadequate. Apart from the almshouses and the work-house there is no provision for old people. The institutional treatment for mothers and children is non-existent, except for one small nursing home and the cottage hospital where beds required for other purposes are usurped. This may appear to be a dismal picture, but it is drawn with a view to stressing, firstly, that your town is the geographic centre of a very wide area, 20 miles in any direction. Secondly, the tendency to centralise your affairs in Exeter, 25 miles away, can never meet the requirements of the Borough and the wide rural area surrounding it.

*Section C.***Sanitary Circumstances**

WATER SUPPLY.—The water supply remained copious and pure during the year, and was not interfered with by military manoeuvres on the moor.

Alderman Harry, the Borough Meteorologist, has supplied the following figures for rainfall :—

		1945	1944	1943	1942	1941
Cranmere ....	....	76.7	86.6	83.9	77.8	65.9
Newbridge ....	....	61.6	63.4	65.6	64.1	56.1
Filter Station	....	52.3	51.4	57.9	48.5	47.5
Dry Days ....	....	180	178	142	174	177

The driest months were November and April, and the wettest October and December.

RIVERS AND STREAMS.—Pollution of the West Ockment was dealt with by repairing the main sewer.

DRAINAGE AND SEWAGE.—Sewers and sewage disposal works have continued satisfactory. The discharge of liquor from the gas works to the sewer, in small quantities, has been carried out, and should prevent future pollution of the East Ockment river.

REFUSE COLLECTION AND DISPOSAL.—Your Medical Officer only received minor complaints regarding this subject during the year. He is, however, still not satisfied with the efficiency of disposal.

RODENT CONTROL.—The rat-catcher exterminated several thousands of these vermin during the year.

SALVAGE.—A mass of material was collected by your council's workmen.

SANITARY INSPECTION.—Visits as follows :—

Houses	....	....	....	49
Houses— <i>re</i> housing	....	....	....	42
Drainage	....	....	....	32
Water Closets	....	....	....	12
Sewerage	....	....	....	17
Water Supply	....	....	....	88
Rivers	....	....	....	11
Refuse Removal	....	....	....	21
Salvage	....	....	....	54
Tip	....	....	....	34
Tents and Vans	....	....	....	3
Schools	....	....	....	15
Infectious Diseases	....	....	....	5
Infestation	....	....	....	11
Rodents	....	....	....	14
Animals	....	....	....	16
Miscellaneous	....	....	....	17
Informal Notices	....	....	....	24
Remedied	....	....	....	21

*Section D.***Housing**

The housing shortage in the Borough is acute and steps were taken by requisition and conversion to ameliorate this circumstance. At the end of the year six of these premises were reconditioned and occupied, work on others was in hand, and at the time of writing are all tenanted. Whilst no new buildings were constructed during the year, sites were prepared for ten temporary houses at Lower Brahams, and a site for permanent dwelling secured.

*Section E.***Food**

Thirty-five condemnation certificates were issued.

MILK SUPPLY.—Samples taken 29, Passed 23, Failed 5. Thirty-seven inspections of cow-sheds, and dairies were made by your inspector and two notices issued. The present position for safeguarding the public's milk supply is anomalous, no less than six authorities are busy controlling either the quantity or quality of this important commodity. Your Medical Officer is of opinion that your council, with its own staff, is quite adequate to attend to this matter.

BAKE-HOUSES AND FOOD SHOPS.—These were inspected regularly, and were found to be kept in a cleanly state.

MEAT.—The Tavistock Urban Council have authorised the inclusion of the subjoined table of meat inspection at their abattoir, in order that you may see the valuable service rendered by the inspector, to whose salary your council subscribes.

MEAT INSPECTION AT TAVISTOCK ABATOIR

	Cattle	Pigs	Cows	Calves	Sheep
No. of animals inspected	2075	272	1352	1227	9765
% of carcasses affected with Tuberculosis ....	.52%	1.1%	3.47%	.32%	—
% of carcasses affected with diseases other than T.B. ....	.96%	2.21%	5.02%	1.79%	.84%
% of organs affected with T.B.	3.85%	6.99%	7.61%	.08%	.01%
% of organs affected with diseases other than T.B.	35.18%	6.99%	37.5%	.48%	7.59%
Total No. of animals killed ....	....	....	....	....	14,691
Total No. of carcasses condemned for tuberculosis ....	....	....	....	....	65
Total No. of carcasses condemned for diseases other than T.B. ....	....	....	....	....	168
Total No. affected with T.B. in some part or organ ....	....	....	....	....	203
Total No. affected with disease other than T.B. in some part of organ ....	....	....	....	....	2,003
Or 16.8% of total carcasses					2,469

OFFENSIVE TRADES.—Two establishments, a manure works and a marine stores have been well conducted and no action has been necessary.

FISH FRYING.—The two establishments have been well conducted.

Section F.

Prevalence of and Control over Infectious Disease

The occurrence of infectious disease during the year was less than the average, and nothing in the way of an epidemic resulted. A small outbreak of scarlet fever occurred, very mild in its manifestations and all cases were capable of being isolated at home. An outbreak of mumps was prolix in its incidence as it attacked a number of adults.

Cases notified by practitioners :—

Scarlet Fever	....	....	....	7 cases.
Measles	....	....	....	7 „
Whooping Cough	....	....	....	9 „
Chicken Pox	....	....	....	1 „
Erysipelas	....	....	....	1 „

Cases notified by head teachers :—

Measles	....	....	....	6 cases.
Mumps	....	....	....	28 „
Whooping Cough	....	....	....	2 „
Scarlet Fever	....	....	....	1 „
Impetigo	....	....	....	4 „

No case of diphtheria was notified during the year, and immunisation of the children was done as energetically as possible. The last return to the Ministry of Health showed that 58% of children under 5 years of age and 94% of school children had been protected from this disease.

TUBERCULOSIS.—Three new cases of tuberculosis were notified and two deaths recorded from this cause.

On the 31st December the following cases remained on the register.

PULMONARY		NON-PULMONARY			
Males	Females	Males	Females	Total	
7	13	3	5	28	

Over a period of years the incidence of the disease has averaged 1.7 per 1,000 population, and appears to be almost stationary.

In conclusion, I would thank the Mayor and Corporation for the ready hearing my proposals always receive.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

E. D. ALLEN-PRICE,

Medical Officer of Health.

